

Doctrinal Extracts

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Doctrinal Extracts / Dhamma Data 01

Equality / Egalitarian - of Sexes

Of sexes, as **men** and **women** // in terms of **spiritual** or **religious** considerations.

1. Contemporary Indian opinion drew sharp distinctions, almost to the point of shutting out women from religious pursuits.[For a fuller discussion of this see Jotiya Dhirasekera's Buddhist Monastic Discipline, p.137 ff.]. **Soma Bhikkhuni** is ridiculed and scoffed at by Mara, with a strict verdict that women would do well to keep out of the domain of sages [Thig. vv. 60-62 and S.1.129].

*Yaṃ taṃ isihi pattaḃbaṃ thānaṃ durabhisambhavaṃ
na taṃ dvaṅgulapaññāya sakkā pappotuṃ itthiyā.*

The Buddhist position, asserting the rights of women in this arena, is

immediately expressed by Soma who insists on the equality of their **intellectual** and **spiritual potential**.

*Itthibhāvo no kiṃ kayirā cittamhi susamahite
nāṇamhi vattamānamhi sammā dhammaṃ vipassato.*

Soma in fact challenges Mara [in the Samyutta version only] and hits hard back at him for his pettiness of drawing distinctions on mere gender basis.

*Yassa nūna siyā evaṃ itth ' āhaṃ puriso ' ti vā
kiñci vā pana aññasmiṃ tam Māro vattum arahati.*

The Therigatha, in the final verse of Soma, records her as having achieved the highest in the spritual realm.

*Sabbattha vihatā nandī tamokkhandho padāḷito
evaṃ jānāhi pāpima nihato tvam asi antaka.*

2. The Cullavagga [Vin.11.254] records the Buddha himself, in reply to a question by Ananda, asserting that women, irrespective of their difference in gender, are capable of attaining all grades of spiritual emancipation from sotāpatti to arahantship.

*Bhabbo ānanda mātugāmo tathāgatappavedīte dhammavinaye agārasmā
anagāriyaṃ pabbajitvā sotāpatti-phalam ' pi sakadāgāmi-phalam ' pi
anāgāmi-phalam ' pi arahattam ' pi sacchikā tun ' ti.*



Doctrinal Extracts / Dhamma Data 02

Equality / Egalitarian - of Sexes

Of women being **differentiated** and **discriminated against**. On their difference and distinctness as women, physically and emotinally, it is held that they would not or should not or could not undertake certain types of activities.

Ko nu bhante hetu ko paccayo yena mātugāmo n ' eva sabhāya nisīdati na kammantaṃ payojetī na kambojaṃ [PTS. incorrect reading kammojaṃ] gacchati [A.11. 82].

Sit as judges on the bench, undertake business ventures, travel abroad to earn money. [The assumption is that they would or should not undertake these.].

The reasons adduced for upholding these differences are

1. that they are easily given to anger,
2. that they are easy victims of jealousies,
3. excessively niggardly,
4. are lacking in wisdom.

Kodhano ānanda mātugāmo issukī ānanda mātugāmo maccharī ānanda mātugāmo duppañño ānanda mātugāmo . Ayaṃ kho ānanda hetu ayaṃ paccayo yena mātugāmo n ' eva sabhāya nisīdati na kammantaṃ payojetī na kambojaṃ gacchati [Ibid.].



Doctrinal Extracts / Dhamma Data 03

Equality / Egalitarian: Superiority of women over men.

1. Buddhist thinking grants women **equality** or even **superiority** over men on account of their **social, moral** and **intellectual** maturity which they are expected to acquire. The most beautiful instance of this comes in the Buddha' s admonition to King Pasenadi Kosala when he positively showed displeasure, to be seen by the Buddha, on hearing of the birth of a daughter to his Queen Mallika [S.1.86].

Some women, O King, are superior to men [*seyyā posā*], if they be wise and virtuous, and are respectful of their parents-in-law, and also are chaste in their behaviour as wives.

*Itthī ' pi hi ekacciyā seyyā posā janādhipa
medhāvinī sīlavatī sassudevā patibbatā.*

2. **Successful women in society:** It is said to be within the power of a woman to make a greater or lesser success of her life [S. IV. 250].

*Saddhāya sīlena ca yīdha vaḍḍhati paññāya cāgena sutena c ' ūbhayaṃ
sā tādisī sīlavatī upāsikā ādiyati sāram idh ' eva attano ' ti.*

Such a virtuous lady who possesses religious devotion, cultivates virtue, is endowed with wisdom and learning and is given to charity makes a success of her life in this very existence.

3. **Religiously triumphant:** Unlike in the Bramin-dominated society of the day, women in Buddhism were free to make a healthy combination of their **social** and **religious virtues** for their own exaltation in both worlds, here and hereafter. They are entitled to pave their own way to heaven. [This is in marked contrast to the teachings in the Manusmriti where it is said that the only way for a woman to be glorified in heaven is by being subservient to her husband: *Patim susrusate yena*

tena svarge mahīyate. Manu V.153.]. According to Buddhist teachings, these are the virtues which are said to groom a woman for such a life. 1. Organises work of the household with efficiency, 2. Treats her servants with concern, 3. Strives to please her husband, 4. Takes good care of what he earns, 5. Possesses religious devotion, 6. Is virtuous in conduct, 7. Is kind and graceful, 8. Is liberal [See A.IV. 271].

*Susamvihita-kammantā saṅgahita-parijjanā
bhattumanāpaṃ carati sambhataṃ anurakkhati.
Saddhāsīlena sampannā vadaññū vītamaccharā
niccaṃ maggaṃ visodheti sotthānaṃ samparāyikaṃ .*



Doctrinal Extracts / Dhamma Data 04

Equality / Egalitarian: Equality of humans / Irrespective of birth [jati] or profession [kamma].

All humans are born equal. In the context of Indian society of the sixth century B.C. the Buddha turned out to be a brave new leader who protested against the discrimination of humans on the basis of birth or profession. In the case of different species of animals like horses, sheep and cattle or more pronouncedly like eagles, lions and snakes, distinct features of differentiation are visibly present. It is so even in the world of plants.

*Tiṅgarukkhe ' pi jānātha na cā ' pi paṭijānare
liṅgaṃ jātimayaṃ tesam aññamaññā hi jātiyo. Vasettha Sutta. Sn. v. 601*

But among the humans, what is implied by the term **jati** or birth is ' being born in any ethnic, social or professional group of people.' The common features

among these different groups which are unifying are said to deserve greater and more careful consideration than the petty and superficial divisive differences of skin colour, texture of hair and shape of eyes on the basis of which some down-to-earth convenient but unhealthy and unjust divisions like the Negroid and Mongoloid etc. are being attempted all the time. But neither the claims nor the denials of justifiable human rights on such bases could be condoned. In the introductory section of the Vasettha Sutta quoted above, we discover two young Brahmins named Vasettha and Bharadvaja. Bharadvaja upholds that Brahmins could isolate themselves into a separate exclusive group on the basis of their being born within a socially identifiable group and claim for themselves, on that very basis, certain exclusive rights over others [*Jātiyā brāhmaṇo hoti Bhāradvājo iti bhāsatī*. Ibid. v. 596].

Vasettha in turn challenges and opts to vest that right in the good conduct and character of people [*Ahañ ca kammanā brūmi evaṃ jānāhi cakkhuma*. loc.cit.]. These Brahmins come to deliberate over these issues with the Buddha. The Buddha insists that while animals could be classified on the basis of their birth into different species, humans do not lend themselves to such divisions.

*Yathā etāsu jātisu lingaṃ jātimayaṃ puthu
evaṃ n ' atthi manussesu lingaṃ jātimayaṃ puthu.* Sn. v.607

On the other hand, the Buddha points out that professional or occupational divisions like farmers [*kassako*] or traders [*vānijo*] could be more meaningful and less exploitable in society. No injustices could be perpetrated on such a basis. Class and group names like Brahmins, the Buddha says, are products of long established traditions, meaninglessly adhered to quite often, and perpetuated through ignorance. Perhaps he was having in mind sources like the Purusa Sukta of the Vedas which ascribed divine origin to the four *Varṇas* and the like.

*Samaññā h ' esā lokasmim nāmagottaṃ pakappitaṃ
samucca samudāgataṃ tattha tattha pakappitaṃ*

*dīgharattam anusayitam dīṭṭhigataṃ ajānataṃ
ajānantā no pabruvanti jātiyā hoti brāhmaṇo* Sn. vv. 648 – 9

The Buddha thereafter resets the value of the term **brahmana**. As a pretigious title, he insists, it must be earned through good moral living which is socially acceptable, its highest value being set through religious endorsement. The Buddha insists that the noblest **brahmana** is born through exaltation of moral goodness and spiritual accomplishment.

*Na jaccā brāhmaṇo hoti na jaccā hoti abrāhmaṇo
kammanā brāhmaṇo hoti kammanā hoti abrāhmaṇo and very positively --
Tapena brahmacariyena samyamena damena ca
etena brāhmaṇo hoti etaṃ brāhmaṇaṃ uttamaṃ.* Sn. vv. 650 & 655



Doctrinal Extracts / Dhamma Data 05

Health: Physical and Mental // Societal, Economic, Religious Considerations.

A healthy mind and / in a healthy body has been a very vital consideration of Buddhism from its very inception. In fact, it is the outcome of a lesson which the Buddha himself learnt as the *Bodhisattva* while he was yet experimenting with his austerities as a means to attaining his release from *samsāra* or cycle of existence. The Buddha-aspirant, suffering the rigours of severe starvation during the six years of *dukkharakārikā*, tells us through his own firm conviction that a physically deteriorated body like his at the time could not achieve any form of happiness [*sukhā*]: *Tassa mayhaṃ Aggivessana etadahosi. Na kho taṃ sukaraṃ sukhaṃ adhigantum evaṃ adhimatta-kasimānaṃ pattakāyena* [Mahasaccaka Sutta at M.1. 247]. In the Dvedhavitakka Sutta [Ibid. 116], recounting his own

experiences of the past, he tells us again that a body put to fatigue [*kilanta*] through excessive mental activity would equally fail in gathering itself together in *samādhi*. *Api ca kho me aticiraṃ anuvitakkayato anuvicārayato kāyo kilameyya. Kāye kilante cittaṃ ūhaññeyya. Uhate citte ārā cittaṃ samādhimhā ' ti.*

Thus the culture of the body spiritually [*bhāvitakāyo*], not its mere muscular growth, as much as of the mind [*bhāvitacitto*] have become vital ingredients of religiousness or spirituality in Buddhism. The Indriyabhavana Sutta of the Majjhima Nikaya [M.111. 298-302] provides an excellent study on this subject. With regard to all sense faculties including the mind, it is said that a good disciple should learn to acquire an attitude of neutrality or equanimity [*upekhā / upekkhā*] in responding to stimuli received from within [i.e. from his own memory experience] or without, good or bad or both [*Idh ' ānanda bhikkhuno cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā ... manasā dhammaṃ viññāya uppajjati manāpaṃ uppajjati amanāpaṃ uppajjati manāpāmanāpaṃ*].

He is required to scan the data received through the senses and discern its true nature as ' being constituted [*samkhata*] and causally generated ' [*paṭicca-samuppanna*]. Therefore he would be wise to conclude that an attitude of neutrality in responding to them would lead to tranquility and serenity [*etaṃ santaṃ etaṃ pañitaṃ yadidaṃ upekhā*]. A person who has acquired this **culture of the sense faculties** or *indriyabhāvanā* is said to gain that state of neutrality [... *uppannaṃ manāpāmanāpaṃ nirujjhati upekhā sañthāti*] with remarkable speed and with equal ease [... *evaṃ sīghaṃ evaṃ tuvaṭaṃ evaṃ appakasirena ... upekhā sañthāti*]. In Buddhism, this acquisition of **upekhā** is said to be the highest *culture of the senses* [*Ayaṃ vuccati Ananda ariyassa vinaye anuttarā indriyabhāvanā*].

Further to this process which is described here as the highest culture of the senses or **anuttarā indriyabhāvanā**, the Sutta introduces to us two more modes or two more stages of culture of the senses. The first of these is listed as **sekho pātipado** which we would translate into English as **one who is on the learner's**

way. Here we meet a Buddhist disciple who is confronted with diverse sense stimuli, delightful or not delightful or both. But one who is on the learner's way, i.e. the *sekho*, **watches his own reaction** to such stimuli **with a guarded sense of withdrawal or recoil** [*Idh' ānanda bhikkhuno cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā ... uppajjati manāpāmanapaṃ. So tena uppannena... manāpāmanāpena attiyati harāyati jigucchati*]. This marks a vital judgemental level. The disciple who is described here represents the one who has chosen the Buddhist way of culture [*pātipado*] and is set on the path to perfecting it . But he is still far from accomplishing it [*sekho*]. This spells out the first stage which we would refer to as the true processing of Buddhist spiritual culture [*bhāvanā / indriyabhāvanā*].

As the second, we have *ariyo bhāvitindriyo*. This in English would mean **the one who has cultured his senses** or **has brought his sensory reactions under control**. The bhikkhu in this category, on responding to sense stimuli of different types, would act in the following manner. With regard to whatever is loathsome, he would choose not to develop an attitude of loathsomeness but to dwell in a frame of mind of un-loathsomeness [*So sace ākaṅkhati paṭikkūle appaṭikkūlasaññī vihareyyan ' ti appaṭikkūlasaññī tattha viharati*].

While the earlier *sekho pātipado* apparently implies a stage of spiritual apprenticeship, *ariyo bhāvitindriyo* implies **complete mastery** over that process. Within this, a fourfold classification of reaction in terms of loathsome and un-loathsome, brought about through a **cultivated outlook** [...*saññī vihareyyaṃ*] is indicated. But the complete mastery stage here seems to be well beyond this manipulative stage of cultivated outlook of alternating between loathsome and unloathsome. It is the highest stage within the *ariyo bhavitindriyo* and is described as transcending both stages of loathsome and un-loathsome [*paṭikkūla* and *appaṭikkūla*] and is presented as: *Sace ākaṅkhati paṭikkūlañ ca appaṭikkūlañ ca tadubhayaṃ abhinivajjetvā upekhako vihareyyaṃ sato sampajāno ' ti upekhako tattha viharati sato sampajāno*. Ibid. 301]. This is the stage of perfect equanimity or *upekhā* with regard to sensory reactions.

We discover the Commentarial notes on this Sutta to be very interesting. The whole theme of the Sutta is carefully integrated to the salvation scheme of Buddhism. In Buddhism, greed, hatred and delusion [*rāga dosa moha*] are regarded as the roots of evil [*akusala - mūlān*]. Our Commentarial notes guide us in this direction, indicating that normal reactions to sensory stimuli run in the direction of being agitated in terms of these roots of evil. But a bhikkhu, we are told, does not allow his sensory stimulation to drag his mind in the direction of greed, hatred or delusion [*Iti ayam bhikkhu cakkhudvāre rūpārammaṇam ' pi itthe ārammaṇe manāpaṃ anitthe amanāpaṃ majjhatte manāpāmanāpañ ca cittaṃ tassa rajjitum vā dussitum vā muyhitum vā adatvā ' va pariggahetvā vipassanaṃ majjhatte thapeti. MA. V. 107*]

The next valuable bit of information is in reference to what we described above as **cultivated outlook** or ... *saññī viharati*. An invaluable prescription indeed. Agreeable or disagreeable [*appaṭikkūla* and *paṭikkūla*] are obviously common forms of reaction [as likes and dislikes] to things of the world which confront us. Buddhism, with its self-operated salvation scheme, teaches us to minimise the *shock of impact* by placing before the objects which lure us [*itthe ārammaṇe / manāpaṃ*] or irritate us [*anitthe ārammaṇe / amanāpaṃ*] a screen of the opposite character. Its method is as follows. When one faces something disagreeable [*paṭikkūle*], one is called upon to react with **loving kindness** [*mettā - pharaṇena*] towards that object. Or look upon that object analytically as a conglomeration of elemental components, breaking up as it were the attraction or repulsion of its wholeness [*dhātuto upasamhārena*]. On the other hand, when something attractive [or non-disagreeable] presents itself, one is called upon to dwell on its unattractive side [*asubha - pharaṇena*] and look upon its impermanence [*aniccato upasamhārena*].

Commenting on the last stage of complete mastery over reactions to sense stimuli [*upekhako viharati*], we have the instruction that on seeing an object with one's eye, the bhikkhu does not allow his mind to react in terms of *pleasure* [*su -*

’ ’ ’

mano] or *displeasure* [*du - mmano*]. In that stage he is perfectly neutral [*upekhako*], mindful [*sato*] and possessing adequate judgement and wisdom [*sampajāno*]. Here is the Commentary: *Idha bhikkhu cakkhunā rūpaṃ disvā n' eva sumano hoti na dummano upekhako viharati sato sampajano*. Ibid. 108.